

**CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)**  
**OPENING STATEMENT FOR NANOTECHNOLOGY HEARING**  
**September 21, 2006**

I want to welcome everyone to this important hearing on a subject that has been a matter of continuing concern to this Committee.

As our hearing last fall on this subject brought home, a great deal is at stake in setting a research agenda on the environmental and safety consequences of nanotechnology. The nanotechnology industry, which has enormous economic potential, will be stymied if the risks of nanotechnology are not clearly understood and addressed. And, of course, the potential danger to human beings and the environment is literally incalculable if we don't understand how nanotechnology can interact with our bodies and our world. That's why there's unusual agreement among every sector – business, government, environmental advocacy groups – that we need to get a handle on this issue. Our witnesses will underscore these basic points again today.

There's also broad agreement, I think, about what the government has to do to protect both the public and business. The government needs to establish and implement a clear, prioritized research agenda and fund it adequately. The problem is that we still haven't done that, and "time's a wasting."

The federal agencies have made some steps in the direction of setting an agenda, which, admittedly, is a difficult process. I'm pleased that the long-delayed interagency report on research needs is finally being released at – and dare I say, because of – our hearing today. But as that document itself states, it's only a first step, and it doesn't fully set priorities, never mind assign them. So we're on the right path to dealing with the problem, but we're sauntering down it at a time when a sense of urgency is required.

The second problem, of course, is that environmental research on nanotechnology is grossly underfunded. Conservative estimates of what's needed are more than twice as much as we're spending today. This is "penny wise and pound foolish," to put it mildly, given what nanotechnology could contribute to our economy and what health problems from nanotechnology could detract from it.

So I hope that our discussion today can infuse everyone here – including the media and the public – with a sense of urgency about this problem. We need to come up with a mechanism in which priorities will be set for, assigned to, and actually carried out by the responsible federal agencies. Current coordinating mechanisms clearly are inadequate, and I hope we can have a good discussion today of what to do instead.

I know that diversity is a source of strength in our research establishment, and I am not one who believes that duplication is always a bad thing. But we have to bring some order to this process or we're going to squander our chance to understand nanotechnology on a schedule that will help business and protect the public.

So I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, and I assure them we will be following up on this at the very least until the day I leave office on Dec. 31, and hopefully long past that.

Let me just address a couple of protocol matters before I turn to Mr. Gordon. First, I'm going to try to keep witnesses and Members to their five minutes because we have a large panel and votes may occur as early as 11:30. Second, let me say that normally, we would have Dr. Bement testify first as the highest ranking official on the panel, but we wanted to hear first from the official who is chairing the interagency effort to get some perspective. Finally, I understand that Mr. Farland has announced his

retirement, and I want to thank him for his years of helping this Committee and serving the public.

Mr. Gordon.